The Black Cat

September 1902

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Robert Roberts.

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The Desert's Gold.*

BY ROBERT ROBERTS.

THE first flush of dawn touched the jagged crest of a distant range of red and yellow desert mountains — then the light sped quickly down the scarred cliffs, revealing the black depths of gulches and the cruel, sharp edges of the great volcanic rocks. At the base of the cliffs it touched the red sands and rested on them till they looked like a bed of glowing coal. And then the long, uneven floor of the mesa surface, with its scattered cacti and meagre patches of greasewood, began to show in wide, monotonous stretches. The light grew rapidly vivid and garishly colored — dawn in the desert comes quickly.

The forenoon wore slowly on, with nowhere a movement, nowhere a sound. Perhaps a coyote was skulking stealthily home from his night's ghoulish feast, but his coat of tawny gray fitted in too well with the red-gray sands — he was invisible. Perhaps a sleek-furred kangaroo rat was busy under a creosote bush, or a cactus wren was boring into the soft flesh of a giant *sahuaro* cactus, and uttering now and then a contented chirp. But in the awful immensity of the dead and silent desert such littlenesses were invisible and inaudible.

At high noon the glare and the parching heat were intolerable.

* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $250 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

The mountains had their tops apparently cut off and suspended trembling in the sky. Over all the level reaches of sand and rock were a dancing and vibration due to the waves of heated air. The mirage revealed now a sparkling lake, with leafy borders, and now shifted the scene to moving troops of distorted, half-distinct animals. It was dangerous to the brain's sanity to puzzle too long over these weird pictures of the desert. One looked to the pinnacled mountains seemingly so close, but really a full score of miles away, for rest and reality. Surely there could be found escape from this furnace breath and blinding glare. But when one reached these promises of respite, they would be found false. They, too, were desert; the gulches were dry and stifling; the rocks cruelly sharp and bare; the few plants as meagre and as fiercely spined and thorn-laden as those out on the mesa. Only that the sun reached the bottom of the gulches a little later in the morning and left a little earlier in the evening — that was all the betterment. No less pitiless and fatal are the fire-scorched, wind-and-sand-scarred desert mountains than the limitless wastes of the desert floor. No place for human living here.

But the high-noon sun had found a softer target for its searing arrows than the stolid lava rocks — had found targets that would suffer and did suffer, terribly and unceasingly, with every dart of the fire-tipped rays. Two bent backs of men in the strong bottom of a gulch; men, crying with pain, but cursing with joy, striking and prying with picks, clutching with bared and bleeding hands at the glass-sharp rocks, and piling eagerly into a battered gold-pan the rough yellow nuggets. Only at the very end of an eternally long and suffering yesterday had they come to the unmistakable signs of a "find." And after a feverish night of half-delirious sleeping and waking they had sprung, haggard and wild-eyed, to their dropped picks. And still half-delirious, but wholly beast-like, they raged and toiled at the resisting rocks.

For a month — an eternity it had seemed — had the two men faced the horrors of midsummer in the heart of the Mojave Desert in this desperate game with Nature for her desert's gold. And the long month's terrible struggle had bitten in. The desiccated, parchment-like skin, the parched, alkali-blistered throats, the puckered, squinting eyes with sharp, black dagger-points of pupils,

the unkempt hair, and drawn, seamed faces all told the story of physical suffering, of scanty food and long hours without water, of mental stress, of hopes raised fever-high and then chilled to despair, of reckless resolution and secret fears and foreboding, of all the physical and mental tortures that come to the man immured in the merciless desert. In the days came the glare and the burning and the monotony of red sand and blackened rocks. In the daytime, too, came the unsettling pictures of the mirage, with their constant reminder of the clear, cool lake and soft green meadow and shady grove of a long-forsaken home; in the day was the helpless toiling — the conflict with the dull rocks and the scorching sand in the awful silence and isolation. But the nights were even worse. Sleepless and feverish they tossed for half the hours, naked and oozing with perspiration on their coarse blankets, and then, falling into a fitful sleeping, made fearful by horrid whirling visions, they were wakened in the early morning by a sudden chill which struck through and through their weakened bodies. The desert night is as deceitful as the desert day is mercilessly honest.

Wilson, the older man, though long accustomed to privation and over-strained endurance, had been hardest hit — his age counted against him. His shaggy breast and arms, his great, grimy hands and matted crown of coarse hair made him look like a bear in human guise. He worked silently, except for muttered curses, but in his brain odd pictures and queer fancies flitted. He straightened himself unsteadily occasionally, and with a slow gesture threw the hair from before his eyes, and looked dazedly around. He stared hard at the great cliff sides; he turned his head slowly till his eyes rested on the little "shack" only a hundred yards away near the mouth of the gulch, and then, seemingly reassured, he bent again to his violent picking. At times, though, he would lift, to look only at his companion, working steadily by his side, and then a strange look would come into his haggard face, his pin-point pupils would contract even tighter, and a slight trembling would run over his body. "Who is this man here, taking my gold?" he thought at first; and then, after a moment, would silently answer himself, "Why, it's Charlie, of course; my pardner, Charlie Bennett."

Bennett himself took no notice apparently of the older man's occasional breaks in the work; he looked neither to side nor above; he picked and pried, his eyes fastened on the rocks at his feet. He, too, felt occasional "touches of sun" — they came more frequently than he liked — but he could still quickly pull his fleeing wits together. He had a firmly knit body and strong, hard face. He was too young to be already a voluntary exile from home and friends; but one doesn't ask questions about the early life of the desert hermits. Not that some men might not be able to answer them honestly and reveal nothing but a simple "hard luck" story, but there are other cases. Bennett's case was one of the others.

Despite his apparent unobservance of the older man's vagaries, he but too keenly realized the situation. His own condition suggested too strongly the probability of something worse in the weaker man. He was estimating just how long, or rather how short a time, they could stand the terrible strain. His brain too, like Wilson's, was busy, but most of the time it was a clear and keenly reasoning brain. Although the nuggets were numerous, he believed it was but a pocket, and that another day's hard work would exhaust it. Then they could go — go with their buckskin bags and belts laden with yellow gold. A day's tramp across the burning mesa would bring them to the great, silent river of the desert, the Rio Colorado. Through the heart of the desert wastes the great red river winds for half a thousand miles. In all this distance but two small ever-live tributaries come to it, but it is always a mighty river, carrying the waters of Wyoming, Colorado and Utah down to the sand wastes where lap the blue waters of the Gulf of California. There, on the river bank, was an Indian rancheria, and a canoe could be got. Then a long pull down through the cañons and between the mesquite and arrowwood lined banks for a hundred miles to Yuma. And then swiftly by the overland train to where the yellow gold could buy compensation for all these horrible days under the desert sun and stars.

But whatever the thoughts and visions of the men, there was no ceasing in the straining work. Automatically, like finely ordered machines, the arms lifted, the backs bent, the picks struck home. And on these bended backs and bowed heads the sun unceasingly, pitilessly, wielded its fiery scourge. As if driven by a taskmaster

with a knotted lash the men strove, gasping and dripping. Or, rather, from only one the beads of perspiration rolled — the other had a shining, dry face, and that was no good thing. But they lasted, these two, and the sight of the old gold-pan with its dull yellow freight was the meat and drink which kept these human machines agoing. And so the killing afternoon passed; the sun dropped behind a flat-topped loma, and the swift twilight came. But the sands and rocks kept up their burning; it would be far into the night before the desert oven would cool and chill.

Wilson and Bennett dropped their picks and without a word staggered down the cañon towards the shack. Bennett had moved to lift the heavy gold-pan, but Wilson, with an articulate growl, and a sudden lurch, clutched it up and carried it. With the sudden relaxation came a terrible reaction. They had not drunk for hours. Now they found their throats rough and burning, their tongues swollen. The older man kept up a constant peering into the shadows of the cañon's sides. His head swung from side to side; he muttered low to himself.

Soon they came to the forlorn little adobe cabin, with its roof and sides thatched with arrowwood packed from the distant river bank on the back of the lonesome burro which shared with them the privations of desert life. In the jungle along the river roamed a dozen other burros long escaped or turned adrift and living now half wild, a new kind of animal added to the desert fauna. After a long draught from the earthen water jar, which was packed on the burro's back to and from the river when necessary, the little fire of greasewood sticks was made, the black coffee-pot swung over it, and the few thick slices of bacon set to sputtering in the long unwashed skillet. All this was done without a word, and as automatically as the picking and prying of the long day. They were simply machines that could stoke themselves as well as do their day's work.

With supper over, came the blank. It would be several hours before the moon, now past its full, would rise. The darkness and the silence, and still the burning! Now came the visions, confused and flying, to each man. Bennett ground his teeth and clenched hard his fists. Should he break now, when the gold was found, was here on the cabin floor? One more day, and the stake

was won. He fought his madness; he rose and walked; he talked to himself slowly and carefully. He was still master; he could say over the one verse he had ever known; he could count the stars of the Great Dipper, and find the North Star; he could spell his name and Wilson's. What, by the way, of Wilson? Hadn't the old man been acting unusually queerly this afternoon? And how silent he was? Where was Wilson, anyway? If would be better to keep an eye on Wilson — he was surely breaking. Yes, the old man should certainly be watched. Not that he was likely to run off with the gold. There was the gold-pan with the nuggets on the cabin floor between the bunks. But when the desert claims a man for its own, he is no longer a man; that is, a human man. He is a beast-man or a man-beast.

Bennett smiled grimly as he mused over the frailty of the barrier between the beast and the man when the man has fought with the desert a month. He himself was too near the danger line; he had had awful glimpses of what he could become.

Then he pulled himself violently together. Wilson was gone! Engrossed in his struggle with himself, he had not noticed when the old man, ever muttering to himself, had taken his shotgun from the cabin, and gone off up the cañon in the darkness. Wilson had gone to protect the gold — his gold — up there under the jagged pinnacles. He would watch by it through the night. The coyotes should not get it, nor the flying things, nor the beasts that crawled!

Bennett was wide awake and keenly master of himself now. This was a crisis. Wilson might come back re-nerved and sane from his night's vigil, or he might come back a maniac. Perhaps a few hours of the night air might refresh him and cool off his too heated brain; he might return at any time. Bennett decided to lie down on his bunk, so as to allow Wilson to come back and not find himself too obviously watched. It might be only a humiliation for the old man, or it might, indeed, be the means of re-exciting his hallucination. So, putting the precious gold-pan by the edge of his bunk — he would take no chances even in the utterly uninhabited desert — he stripped and threw himself on the soiled rough blankets. Instead, however, of leaving his heavy revolver as usual in its holster attached to the belt hanging on the wall over

the bunk, he took it out and laid it by his side. He would be very ready for an emergency.

And then he lay awake and breathing hard in the hot night. His head seemed to get full to bursting of his blood, which throbbed like the dull, regular beating of the piston head in a cylinder. He stared wide-eyed out of the open door at and across the bottom of the arroyo to a great pillar-like ghostly *sahuaro* cactus which stood out indistinctly in the just coming moonlight. His brain filled with memories of old days, all broken into by sharp pictures of incidents in the harrowing life of the last month. He could not control his thinking, and occasionally came blanks. Then he would start. This would never do. He must not forget the vision-haunted old man alone out in the cañon. He was to watch. There was no telling what might happen. And then came the startling and nerve-racking cries and laughs of the coyotes; it was the usual song of the night, but always weird and strange and fascinating. And Bennett listened and tried to estimate how many coyotes were there to-night. This was an old play of his. Indeed, he had a curious pride in being able to satisfy himself, after careful listening and analyzing, of the exact number of gray outcasts that barked out their tangled chorus each night. And to-night it was especially tangled. Were there more than usual — or was some old member becoming more ventriloquially expert? He gave himself up to this serious matter. He was sure of three, yes, of four. There was a curious new cry, rather low and repeated over and over again, over and over and — The coyotes had sung Bennett to sleep.

Suddenly, startled, he opened his eyes. He was chilled; he rolled slowly over; his eyes were turned toward the centre of the cabin floor. It was all flooded with moonlight. Then, suddenly, a great black blotch, a shadow, was there; an odd shadow, rather like a man, a man with an arm out. He traced the shadow to the doorway; he looked up. Then he saw that there was a man in the doorway with an arm out; no, he was holding out a stick. It seemed like Wilson; yes, it was Wilson, and he was pointing the stick at him. Great God! it was Wilson aiming his shotgun at him! Like a flash Bennett, fully awakened as if by an electric shock, jerked up his revolver. And then a crashing roar, a double

crashing roar, filled the night. And when the smoke wreaths had slowly drifted out through the cabin door the moonlight showed on the bunk a naked white, still, sprawled-out thing, on which dark slowly moving lines were forming, and, huddled in a heap on the cabin floor, a black mass, moaning and muttering. The thing in the bunk was pardner Bennett, dead, and the moaning heap on the floor was pardner Wilson, with a pistol ball in his right hip.

For an hour Wilson lay on the cabin floor. He felt his hurt but little, but expected to die. Gradually, however, the pain increased, and with it came a partial clearing of his senses. What he had done came to him in part of its hideousness. But now that it was done he must get the gold, and get away from the red-blotched white thing on the bunk. He staggered to his feet, but the frightful darts of pain which shot through his hip sickened him, and he fell. But he *must* go. He crawled to the gold-pan and dragged it to his own bunk, and there he stuffed the nuggets into a small buckskin bag, that he had long used to carry specimens. He tried rising again, and by doing it very slowly and nerving himself against the fiery pain he could keep unsteadily on his feet. And now for the river, twenty miles away, and there a skiff and an Indian rower, and down to Yuma.

. . . . . .

Again it was full moon on the blazing desert. Every one of the few living things in this waste of miles was under cover; the scattered quail that lived in the dry arroyo that ran down to the river were huddled under the scant shade of a crucifixion thorn; the desert mice were in their holes, the coyotes invisible. This was no time for exposing one's self to the direct flames which heated the great oven. But again the searching sun found one living target — a black speck on the desert floor, that moved unevenly, irregularly; a living something in human guise, now half-erect, now on all fours. Something clad in rags and spined like a porcupine with the thorns of *cholla* and *bisnaga;* something with cut and bleeding hands and knees, and ever raving and cursing out of a mouth from which protruded a black, dry, swollen tongue; something clutching with raw talon a filled and heavy buckskin bag. Half of the night and half of the day had Wilson fought his

way with supernatural endurance of torture over the lava-strewn mesa. In the delirious haste of getting off with his gold, and away from that silent, distorted white thing on the bunk, he had started without a crust of hard-tack or a drop of water. And the fever of the wound and the burning heat of the sun had combined to make a half day of thirst horrible in its results. But, though utterly crazed, some strange instinct held him in a straight line toward the great river, that, once reached, could give relief and escape from all this torture and horror.

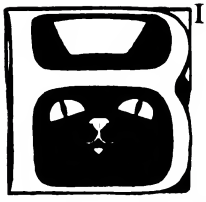
The crawling man was dragging himself up the slight ascent of a loma; he turned aside for no stone or cactus; he fought with the mighty strength of madness. The staring, bloodshot eyes were set in a rigid stare directly ahead. They sought but one thing. And as the half-naked, blistered body lifted itself on the crest of the loma, that thing was before it. The broad red flood of water was moving sluggishly along almost beneath his feet; this was the river edge of the desert floor. Below was a narrow strip of arrow-wood, hardly a rod wide, and then the red water, lapping the muddy bank. With one shrill, choked cry Wilson lifted himself fully erect, stretched out his torn hands, in one of which was clutched the buckskin bag, and threw himself toward the river. The body bounded horribly down the forty feet of steep stony slope, and at the bottom lay, slightly twitching.

. . . . . .

Days after, when the coyotes came no more, the tiny, glittering, black beady eyes of the desert rats spied out the bag of buckskin, and piece by piece they gnawed it away, that their nests in the arrowwood tangle might be lined with this new soft stuff. It was a treasure trove for them! And as they gnawed, one by one small dull yellow stones rolled out of the bag and lay among the other stones of the desert's edge. These yellow bits were of no interest at all to the swift little rats. But the desert had reclaimed its gold!

Billmyer's Sprinkling Machine.*

BY GEORGE NOX MCCAIN.



ILLMYER was a strategist — the bravest and the cleverest that ever set face towards the amber sunset of the Sahara. His name will live for generations in the tents of the Tuaregs. We were all ready to confess it after the danger was past and the caravan crept between the white walls that Darwar stretched forth to us like welcoming arms.

Yet no one would have supposed that a cunning out-matching that of the Arabs and a foresight unknown to his predecessors along the camel route was concealed behind such a deceptive exterior. Perhaps the small, piercing black eyes under the overhanging angry arch of scrubby brows might have furnished a clue to his cunning and daring. But we were not looking for physiological star-pointers before the caravan straggled out of Biskra — certainly not after it was all over, and the desert metropolis became to us a city of refuge.

When I left Philadelphia I carried with me certain credentials from the University authorities and a copy of a rare map outlining the site of a partially buried city a hundred and eighty miles southwest from Biskra, and thirty miles from the oasis of Darwar. I was preparing to fulfil a long-cherished design of visiting the Sahara when the Provost of the University of Pennsylvania appealed to me, as an alumnus of that institution, to go a little out of my way and look over the ruins of Hakasar as a prospective point for archæological research. I undertook the mission with considerable satisfaction, for it afforded a distinct and inspiring object, apart from the pleasure which I anticipated in my journey.

I fell in with Billmyer — Adolphe, as his clerk Josephi familiarly called him — at Constantine. He had come in by way of

Philippeville from Marseilles. I had run over from Gibraltar to Oran and thence along the tortuous and pokey, though picturesque, North African Railroad to Constantine. The proprietor of the Grand Hotel introduced me to Billmyer an hour after my arrival when I inquired about the prospect of getting to Darwar.

"*Ah! mon cher ami*," said M. Lange, tapping lightly with his right forefinger the left lapel of my coat, "you air in what ze Americain calls ze gran' good luck; permit me," and shuffling across the hotel office he introduced me to a short, stout individual of forty, not over particular as to dress and linen, who rose heavily from a green wicker chair to grasp my hand and murmur a stereotyped phrase of pleasure in broken English.

"*Mon ami* Be-elmyer ees on he-es way to Darwar. Talk wis he-em." With a nod and a Gallic smile of satisfaction the little fellow left us alone and trotted back to his desk under the branching wall-light.

Billmyer, an Alsatian, was the junior member of a firm, manufacturers' agents for silks, fine cottons and printed fabrics. The main house was at Amiens, with a branch at Marseilles and another at Oran. It was proposed to establish another African branch in Darwar with the hope of controlling the north Sahara trade.

The great drawback, as he explained, was the tremendous risk assumed in transporting goods from Biskra, or indeed from Saida or Tlemsen, to the desert oases. The spirit of rebellion against French authority was running high, and many of the desert tribes were conducting a system of murderous and indiscriminate brigandage that was demoralizing the entire commercial interests of the Sahara. The Tuaregs were the principal malcontents and purveyors of trouble.

Billmyer told me all this and a great deal more as we lolled in the cool wicker chairs, smoking black Hungarian cigars and sipping a vile Algerian sherbet which tasted like shaved ice flavored with a low-grade sample of bay rum. He informed me further that he believed he had solved the problem of desert transportation. I know now, to my joyful and intense satisfaction, that he had.

"Got a gun?"

I replied in the negative. I did not dream that arms would be

necessary in such a peaceful pursuit as I contemplated, and so informed him. He smiled grimly at my confiding ignorance.

"Never mind; I've got an extra magazine rifle and you can have it. You may need it. It fires twenty-four times without reloading."

It made me feel "creepy" to hear my new friend discuss prospective bloodshed in such a matter-of-fact manner, just as though it were an ordinary question of berths, railroad tickets or meals. I did not betray any agitation, however, and before we parted for the night arrangements for my desert journey with him had been completed. Next day we proceeded by rail down to Biskra, the last outpost of French civilization on the borders of the great desert.

During the ensuing eight days Billmyer left the details of getting the caravan in shape to his chief clerk and four subordinates. One thing alone claimed the Alsatian's undivided attention, the care of certain merchandise for two of the camels. His solicitude and secrecy were so great that he permitted no one to enter the corrugated iron shed while he was assisting Josephi to pack the boxes.

"It is a little present I am carrying down to the children of the desert," he said with a queer smile and an apologetic manner, as he directed the adjustment of the last rope and gave the order to go forward into the gray dawn.

To my notion it was a mighty queer and cumbersome gift. On each of the leading camels were fastened two wide-tired wheels, evidently designed for desert traffic. Each was braced with a brass cross-bar, and set in a brass-bound hub. Two wooden boxes, about three feet long, and a smaller box, a foot square, composed, in addition, the burden of these two desert carriers.

Billmyer did not volunteer any further information about these gifts, beyond announcing in an unusually loud and, to me, blustering and ostentatious tone, in the presence of Hassim, the camel contractor, that he hoped the sprinkling machines would prove effective and satisfactory. In a general way I gathered the inference early in the journey that these gifts were intended for some sheik whose favor the merchant desired to cultivate, and hence the anxiety for their safe delivery.

The caravan that moved out of Biskra by the so-called south

gate, between parallel rows of towering palms, comprised thirty camels and eight saddle horses. The bulk of the merchandise consisted of textile fabrics, fine tobacco and, I suspected, some contraband ammunition. The total value of the consignment, according to the information volunteered by its owner, was about one hundred thousand francs.

Hassim estimated that it would require a week to reach Darwar. That is, unless we were interrupted, in which case — he shrugged his shoulders and lifted his dark eyes submissively to heaven — there was no telling when we would get there. "Allah knows," he said, with stolid Moslem resignation and fatalism in his voice.

The second day after the frowsy palm tops had dropped behind the northeast line of the desert we caught our first fleeting glimpse of the real children of the Sahara. There were less than a dozen of them. They skirted the southern horizon, appearing and disappearing behind the sand dunes and hillocks, finally drifting away into the distance like shadows. The fourth morning out we were made painfully aware of the dangers that sentinelled our path.

The sun was less than an hour high when a fusillade of rifle shots startled the horses and threw the camel drivers into a semi-panic. Two hundred yards in our rear, and spread out in fan-like formation, was a wild, gun-flourishing band of Bedouins. Their appearance was as startling as it was mysterious. We had no intimation of their presence until they were upon us. They had hidden in the hollows that seamed the surface of the desert until we were well past, for it is one of the erroneous teachings of grammar-school geography that the Sahara, at least for two hundred and fifty miles south of its indeterminate northern border, is a level waste of yellow sand. It is a succession of ridges and hollows of dunes and rocks.

Billmyer promptly gave the order to halt and, beckoning Hassim to his side, rode back a little way and waited for the Arabs, who the chief of the camel drivers said were Tuaregs, to disclose the object of their visit. To most of us with any degree of perception the object was unpleasantly apparent.

The chief of the band, which numbered about fifteen, rode insolently around our little group several times and then, jerking

his horse violently to its haunches, made a gesture of salutation with his right arm and rifle.

"Allah be with you and have you in his keeping," exclaimed the cut-throat solemnly, riding up to a distance of twenty yards.

"Allah be good unto your family," replied Hassim meekly, in the same lying flowery fashion.

"Whither do the children of the North journey?" demanded the Arab, through Hassim as interpreter.

Billmyer scanned the motionless murderer with a sneer curling his thick lips as the chief of the camel drivers interpreted the message. He ran his beady black eyes over the theatrical grouping of the Tuareg band, then brought them back to rest with a contemptuous glitter upon the chief figure in the foreground. A full minute elapsed before he spoke, and then turning to Hassim he said, slowly and distinctly:

"Tell him it is none of his damned business."

The chief of the camel drivers glanced hastily at his master, frowned at the audacity of the answer — and remained silent.

"Did you hear what I said, Hassim?" said Billmyer, his heavy features twitching and his dark eyes ablaze with anger.

The Alsatian's answer as interpreted by Hassim had a magical response. There was an instant shrill and penetrating chorus of protesting cries from the Bedouins — a nervous clutching of rifles. The chief, raising himself in his stirrups as if disbelieving his ears, leaned forward and in harsh voice demanded a repetition of the words.

"Tell him it is none of his damned business," thundered Billmyer, his perspiring face an apoplectic purple by this time. Then he added a sentence consigning the Tuareg to the abode of the lost, whither, the Alsatian intimated, the Arab's father had preceded him.

Hassim's face became yellow with fear and terror. He sat like a graven image on his horse and refused to open his lips. His silence fanned Billmyer's anger into a consuming flame of white wrath.

"If you don't repeat what I have said, I'll kill you." He pulled his magazine rifle from its sling, threw it across his knees and waited.

The chief of the camel drivers had no alternative but to obey.

With quivering beard and faltering tongue he delivered his master's defiant challenge, for that is what it was. I was almost stupefied with surprise and fear. Was Billmyer insane? Nothing under the brassy vault of that African sky could save the caravan from the wrath of the Tuareg after such a vile insult to his sacred dead. I bent forward over the horn of my light wood saddle and murmured a mild reproach.

"Hands off, Watson," he exclaimed fiercely, turning on me like a cougar. "This is my business. I know what I'm doing. Don't interfere until you are asked."

The Alsatian's second insult struck the Bedouins dumb. Absolute silence reigned for a moment. Nothing stirred except the faint flapping of a dirty white burnous in the blistering air, or the tossing of a restless horse's head. The face of the Arab chief presented a study in fiendish malignancy. His thin upper lip contracted into a ghastly smile that showed his white, gleaming teeth behind his beard. Suddenly, without removing his eyes from Billmyer's face, he gave a sharp command, and the next instant the brigands were scurrying off across the desert. He followed more slowly, but without another word or sign as he wheeled to the westward.

The most horribly apprehensive day of my life crept to a close at last. I had not exchanged a word with Billmyer or Josephi after the episode of the morning. They rode together slightly in advance of the caravan, closely scanning the monotonous expanse of barren wilderness. As for Hassim, his exuberant vitality, which on previous days had led him to ride like a fiend up one side and down the other of the swinging line of ill-smelling camels, had completely disappeared. His picturesque vocabulary of abusive adjectives had dribbled into a little half-moan of protest now and then at the slowness of the march. He was the visual and mental embodiment of Moslem misery. Allah had, indeed, deserted his tents.

A halt for the night was announced two hours before sunset. The usual midday rest had been abandoned and the forced march had enervated every one to the point of exhaustion. My throat burned, and my nostrils were raw from the irritating reddish atoms that rose from beneath the spongy feet of the dromedaries. The

blood in my brain seemed like hot wine, throbbing and pulsating with a fierce heat that gave every object on which my aching eyes rested a reddish, blurring tinge. The lukewarm water from the foul skin bottles failed to allay my thirst and produced nausea instead.

The spot selected for our encampment was a slight elevation in the midst of the plain. Boxes and bales were placed around the summit as a barricade, and the camels were staked in a circle at the bottom. With the exception of Josephi everybody, myself included, was banished by the Alsatian to the foot of the little slope. Stretched out in the shadow of a camel, panting and half sick from heat, I heard Billmyer and his assistant hammering away, with now and then the clink of metal striking metal. Only the heads of the pair were visible above the rampart of boxes. Sullen and disgruntled at being classed with the camel drivers I lay there in the odorous shadow of the dromedary and cursed Billmyer for his vile outburst, and myself for the insane spirit of adventure which had led me into making his acquaintance.

His familiar voice hailed me after a while and, scowling and wrathful, I shook the sand from my clothes and sauntered slowly up to where he waited. The dull red twilight of the desert was deepening into the gray of evening. The east was already a semicircular stretch of violet shadow.

A queer sight met my eyes as I clambered across the barricade of bales. In the centre of the enclosure were what appeared to be a couple of carts, each with a supporting trailer behind. Resting across the single axle of each at right angles was a bulky something covered with yellow oilskin.

"I thought you'd like to see our present," said the master of the caravan with coarse levity, and jerking aside the oilskin he disclosed the bulky, shining barrel of a Maxim machine gun of the latest pattern. Simultaneously Josephi uncovered its counterpart.

"Beautiful present for these murdering thieves, isn't it?" continued Billmyer with an amused expression on his heavy face as he marked my unutterable surprise. "They fire two hundred and fifty shots a minute. We have five hundred rounds in each gun, and another thousand in the box yonder," nodding towards the square box I have described.

A feeling of relief like a blessed balm took possession of my sorely tried spirit. Here were weapons to decimate an army. Our magazine rifles were as pop-guns beside these batteries of death. Something of my satisfaction must have been apparent in my face, for the merchant nodded his head with pleasure and rubbed the palms of his great hands together in a self-satisfied way.

"But why all this assumption of mystery — this wholesale lying?" I inquired bluntly, smarting under the indignity to my self-esteem.

That undiplomatic and irritating word "lying" ruffled the Alsatian in an instant. He was on the point of replying in kind, but halted before the words sprang from his tongue. Billmyer was a bigger man than I gave him credit for; a better man than I. He went on calmly, ignoring my temper.

"I had to fool the camel drivers. Every filthy clown believed the boxes contained sacred vessels from Constantinople for the Mosque at Darwar, and that the wheels belonged to a new-fashioned watering cart for the Sheik's garden. If I had told them the truth, not one of the beggars would have come with us. Why? Because they are afraid of the French authorities. The penalty for carrying arms into the interior is a heavy fine and imprisonment. I have a permit to do it. As for the Tuaregs, I insulted them purposely. I knew I was safe by daylight and in the open with a handful of them. But they will be back here with an army inside of ten hours; then I'll wipe the murdering race out of existence, or teach them a lesson they'll not forget in a hundred years."

The pursy, ungainly Alsatian became a regal figure in my sight at that moment as he stood there with the fire of the sunset in his little eyes, and his broad hand stroking the shining jacket of that wondrous piece of ordnance. Of the thousands who had gone that way before, some to death, and some to hazardous prosperity, Billmyer was the first to lay a trap that had for its object not only his own advantage but the safety of those who would come after him.

The anxious, burning night wore slowly away. There was no moon, but the star-fire was bright enough faintly to outline figures against the shadowy horizon. All the men were within the en-

closure. The dromedaries were sprawled out below, and as hour after hour went by the only sound in the stillness was an occasional low cry, or a sigh-like breathing from the herd.

We who were on watch spoke in whispers without removing our eyes from the sky-line. Hassim stood guard with the rest and ever and anon would audibly murmur a pleading prayer in his melodious tongue. The camel drivers, poor human animals living for a day and the meagre pleasures of a wretched existence, slept like tired dogs under the machine guns. They were better asleep than awake for our purposes and protection.

A pale, colorless line in the east was telling of the coming day when Josephi uttered a warning "hist." Following his whispered direction we saw, off to the northwest, the flitting of ghostly and almost indeterminable forms. Faintly out of the distance came the whinny of a horse. Billmyer jerked the covers off the machine guns and turned one of the pepper-box-like muzzles away from the growing light. Josephi sprang to the other, pointing it towards the coming day. The glare in the east grew brighter. The camel drivers, roused by the activity of the moment, struggled to a sitting posture, but were peremptorily and profanely bidden to lie quiet.

Suddenly, the magic of nature in equatorial regions, the sun lifted itself above the desert rim and flooded the plain with yellow light, disclosing an army surrounding the camp on every side at a distance of five hundred yards. Their leaders evidently discerned no sign of life about our enclosure, though we were watching their every movement through the interstices of packages and bales. There must have been a thousand of them, Tuareg terrors of the desert.

It was a magnificent scene as, with the precision of cavalry, they moved noiselessly forward in a gradually narrowing circle. Every color of the spectrum, in the brilliancy of the sunrise, gleamed in the flowing robes and trailing scarfs of the murderous array. The light on the long brown guns turned their barrels into gold. I knew that death rode in that flashing circle of life and prismatic beauty, yet I lay watching it with a fascination akin to delight.

A movement at my feet recalled me to myself. Billmyer was

moving on hands and knees toward the machine gun with a muttered word to Josephi as to the other. The Alsatian raised himself cautiously until his eyes were on a level with the top of the gleaming barrel. He sighted carefully, and then placed his right hand on the bronze and ebony handle. The Arabs were now less than two hundred yards distant. The circle halted an instant at the sign of an uplifted hand. Then, at its fall, with a shout, a bedlam of howls, cries of derision and shrieking prayers to Allah for vengeance against the infidel dogs, the fanatical horde closed in.

It seemed as if the Fourth of July had come to the desert. I saw the fat fingers of Billmyer close tightly around the handle of the gun crank, and on that instant there came a crashing fusillade that filled the air with sulphur smoke that was bitter in the mouth; a deafening noise, as though a regiment of infantry were volley firing by platoons, or ten thousand fire-crackers were exploding at my side. Josephi, with his back to his employer, was playing another song of death on the machine gun that faced the advancing column from the east.

Before the gray smoke curtain dropped between me and the Tuareg host, I caught a glimpse of a moving picture without a peer in all the world. I shall never see its like again. It was the melting away of a circle of virile life and barbaric splendor. Sweeping the machine gun slowly in the arc of a circle, Billmyer mowed his enemies as a reaper cuts the ripening grain. Horse and rider went crashing down together. The shouts for vengeance became moans of agony. Wounded horses dashed madly across the plain, scattering a bloody dew at every leap and dragging their dying masters at their heels.

Billmyer had delivered his presents to the children of the desert.

Next night, as the flaming sun was dipping beneath the vast ochre circle in the west, the head of the caravan swept under the white arches of the Abraham gate of Darwar. It was a whole company, with the exception of three camels, killed by our own guns.

The Man Under the Tree.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.

IT would be a grim, unpleasant piece of work, to be sure; but what else could they do? The most valuable horses of the settlement had been stolen, one after another, with consummate daring and cunning, and, now that they had the guilty party in their power, were they to let him go because to hang him would be an unpleasant duty?

"Boys, all of you that have a horse you wouldn't like to lose, just step over here."

Nine of the ten came from under the tree and gathered beside their leader in the open. The tenth man — the man who remained in the shadow of the tree — was bound hand and foot and couldn't very well change his position. Besides, he was the "horse thief."

"Well, boys," demanded the leader, "are we a quorum?"

"Sure!"

"Then he hangs?"

The nine men nodded their heads.

"Good!"

"Hold on, gentlemen!" cried the Man under the Tree. "I wish again to assert that I bought this horse which you accuse me of stealing, and paid three hundred dollars for her."

There was a loud guffaw.

"You don't believe me, gentlemen?" The Man under the Tree seemed hurt.

"Believe you!" said the leader. "Why, stranger, that's old Wilkins's Bess and he'd have parted with his grandmother first. They say the bay has some of Wilkins's blood in her, for when she got that clip in the shoulder he grafted the spot with a piece of skin off his own leg."

"But, gentlemen," expostulated the Man under the Tree, "wouldn't it be wise to look up Wilkins first and ask him?"

* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $100 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

The leader smiling, said: "Stranger, were you ever hanged?"

The Man under the Tree made a deprecatory movement. "Only twice," he said.

"Well, you're a cool un!" exclaimed the leader, when he again got his breath.

The Man under the Tree dug his heavy boots into the ground and, though bound hand and foot, managed by a dexterous movement of his knees to bring his body upright.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "I forbid this hanging!"

The whole quorum started.

"Forbid it, as illegal, unconstitutional and tending to destroy the sacred respect for human life in this community!"

The leader fairly grinned. "Stranger, you ain't got a book on etiquette to sell before you go?"

Again the Man under the Tree looked hurt. "Gentlemen, I am a man of my word, and I give you fair warning that if you hang me without a trial I will take this matter before the highest court in Texas. And, moreover, I will not settle in this community nor give it the benefit of my moral influence and support."

The members of the quorum shook their heads and sighed, then gathered in a body around the Man under the Tree. One of them took a lariat from his arm and another adjusted it about the prisoner's neck. This last man was the leader himself, and he could tie a knot that isn't down among sailor knots nor in popular religious pictorial works. It was a hangman's knot and it had never been known to fail when given a fair trial.

Then the loose end of the lariat was thrown over a strong limb of the tree.

"Gently, boys!" cautioned the leader. "Gently! He comes of good family and perhaps if he hadn't been a hoss thief he had been a honor to the community. Gently!"

The body of the prisoner was drawn up, the loose end of the lariat securely fixed, and the quorum stood off and viewed its work. The hanged man swung about six feet free of the ground, his face twisting towards the tree, so that the men beneath could not well see its expression. However, they did not wish to.

"Too bad," murmured the leader, "that his education was neglected. But it's too late now, boys, for moral suasion!"

The others silently nodded their heads in confirmation of this quorum, and mounting their horses, rode hastily away with the bay of Wilkins in the lead.

Arriving at the settlement, about half a mile distant, the stern body gathered under the roof of the Red Dog and began a game of faro.

"Won't old Wilkins be glad when he sets eyes on that bay of his again? The meetin' 'll be just like a father findin' a long-lost daughter."

"Shure!" rejoined a lank cowman with a strong Hibernian accent. "He'll come a tearin' into town like he'd spilt all av his whiskey, or his wife was a-dyin'. I remimber whin he thought ol' Jamp had stol'n the bay, an' he came a-rippin' into camp wid only his shirt an' boots on, an' first he axed fur a quart av gin, thin fur a rope, thin fur justice."

But the whisky being strong and the playing high, the men soon forgot about Wilkins, the Man under the Tree and the bay horse, and not until Wilkins himself came walking into the Red Dog did the incidents of the earlier forenoon again recur to them.

"Hello, Wilkins!" cried the speaker of the late quorum. "How's Bess?"

"Bess? Oh, she's outside, buyin' canned goods."

"Buyin' canned goods, is she?" questioned the cowman. "Whin did ye learn her the thrick?"

Wilkins looked about and seeing a grin on every face realized the confusion of terms. "Oh, you mean the bay; not my wife?"

"Sure!"

"Well," rejoined Wilkins, hitching uneasily, "Bess is 'bout as usual. Yes, Bess is 'bout as usual." He looked at the faro cards and brought out a roll of bills. "Kin I join, boys?"

"Ye kin; an' ye don't need to ask permission av us to lose money. Sit right down, an' welcome ye be, though ye sit sthanin' up on me fate. An' so Bess is 'bout as usual. Well, that's good." The Irishman winked at the dealer. Evidently Wilkins was not yet aware that Bess had been stolen. "An' how's your wife?"

"My wife? Well, she's 'bout as usual, too," replied the gallant Wilkins. When Wilkins made a distinction between his horse and his wife, his horse always felt flattered.

So down Wilkins sat and joined in the game of faro, losing in a quarter of an hour something like two hundred dollars, which was high playing for him.

"Thim be fresh bills ye be playin'," said the Irishman, pausing in his drink. "An' where did yez git th'm?"

Wilkins shifted uneasily. "Well, boys," he finally said, "I might as well let the cat out o' the bag before it's got kittens. I sold Bess this mornin' to —"

The sentence was never finished, or its end fairly drowned in a chorus of "Hell!"

"Can't a man sell his own horse?" demanded Wilkins, rising.

A glass of raw spirits whizzed over his head and crashed against the opposite wall.

"Why, you lop-eared coyote, ain't ye got no more judgmint thin to sell a horse widout first tellin' ivery man wid a rope fur twinty miles aroun'! Ain't — ugh!" broke off the speaker, reaching for another glass to throw at Wilkins. "You clam wid the lockjaw, you fish widout the light av intelligence!"

"What's the matter?" demanded Wilkins, keeping a sharp eye on the glasses.

"Why, you ol' pirate, we've hanged the man ye sol' Bess to, fur a hoss thief! Quick, boys, let's cut him down and give him respictful burial 'fore he's had the time to be insulted!"

There was a wild break for the door and Wilkins went down and was walked all over; but, mad as a hornet, he was not the last to reach the locality of the hanging.

"You're a pack of fools!" he shouted to his companions. "And the next mother's son of you I catch with a shirt on, I'll hang for stealin' the shirt!"

The Irishman almost wept. "Boys, 'twas an error av judgmint and not av heart. Cut him down and tell him so."

The face of the Man under the Tree had swung around to the west, and, as the little body of remorseful settlers drew near, a peaceful smile gathered upon the hanged man's lips and suddenly his eyes opened wide and looked down at those beneath.

"Holy saints in hivin!" cried the Irishman, kneeling in his saddle. "Look at him!"

One of the eyelids of the Man under the Tree trembled and for

a moment closed over the eyeball. The spectators could scarcely believe their own eyes. The Man under the Tree was winking.

"Cut him down!" thundered Wilkins.

"Cut him down yoursilf," groaned the Irishman. "The divil I'll touch it. It's a ghost!"

At these words a shudder went amongst the men and each seemed without the power of motion. Then, as the wind gently swung his body to and fro, the Man under the Tree puckered his lips and began to whistle gaily the air of the children's song:

Merrily, merrily, swinging away,
Under the green leaves all the bright day.

There was something so unexpected in the man being alive after having been hanged for more than an hour, something so uncanny in his wide-open eyes, so creepy in his gay whistle and his smiling mouth, that the onlookers might have been pardoned had they turned in a body and fled. And the partial congestion of the blood in the face lent hideous color to the belief that the man was hanged, yet living.

And the sweet birds come, and the sweet birds go;
And the sunbeams dance on the ground below.

Wilkins braced himself in his seat, took steady, deliberate aim at the lariat just above the head of the hanged man, and fired. The hair thong parted as clean as from a knife-cut, and the Man under the Tree landed in the soft earth, upright and rigid on his feet, instead of falling prone, as a decent corpse would have done.

But when the swing breaks then down you must spill,
Like Jack on a summer day tumbled with Jill.

Having finished whistling this air, the Man under the Tree opened his eyes very wide and looked in turn at each of the men before him, ending by trying to stare out of countenance the Irishman kneeling on his saddle. Whereat that perturbed spirit let out a howl that broke the ghastly spell and, springing from his horse, Wilkins approached the bound man.

It was with the greatest doubt and trepidation that the others watched Wilkins as he freed the Man under the Tree of the noose about his neck and severed his bonds; but, instead of falling down, a corpse, or vanishing like a ghost, he gratefully stretched his limbs, cleared his throat, licked his congested lips, and, singling

out the Irishman, addressed him pleasantly, if somewhat hoarsely:

"Good afternoon, sir."

At these words the superstitious Hibernian collapsed, looking for all the world, with his great, lank arms and legs, like some queer kind of game, all tentacles, thrown across his horse's saddle.

Wilkins, not having seen the man hanged, was less affected than the others, and he was the first to find speech.

"We owe you an apology, sir," he began, rather lamely.

The Man under the Tree held up his hands deprecatingly. "No apology, no apology, sir; no occasion to apologize. *I* like a pleasant joke now and then as well as any man."

At these reassuring words all the remainder of the company, saving the Irishman, found speech, and many were their ejaculations of wonder and delight as they dismounted and crowded around the Man under the Tree.

"Why, you or'nary cuss," cried the former speaker of the quorum, "you'll hold whisky yet!"

"Whisky," said the Man under the Tree, meditatively. "Whisky! It seems to me I have heard that word before. Ah!" He took one of the several flasks hastily proffered him, and holding it high over his head, cried: "Gentlemen, a toast! Here's to the man who likes whisky when it's good and men when they're a little bad — *Myself!*"

This toast was drunk with the highest approval, and the Man under the Tree proposed a second.

"Here's to the man who can whistle when he's blue, and who likes everybody to enjoy themselves — *Myself!*"

This grim toast was received with vociferous acclaim, and the Man under the Tree proposed a third and last toast.

"Here's to the man you can't hang, *for his windpipe is silver, and the rope only tickles him and makes him laugh — Myself!*"

There was a crash of broken glass, and the Man under the Tree drank the third toast alone, for those about him had let drop their flasks in sheer surprise.

An Act of Piracy.*

BY ALBERT SONNICHSEN.

WHEN the steamer *Siragao* sailed from Manila with Portsmouth Peters in command, every one of the ten hands for'ard felt that something was in the wind. They knew Portsmouth Peters—knew him well—he wasn't the boy to take a skipper's berth on a five-hundred ton tobacco freighter. They didn't need a fifteen-knot craft like the *Siragao* in that trade, nor yet a white crew, with Manila full of coolies—not much, they didn't. Something in the old line, you bet, but, honest souls, they didn't give a cuss, for when it came to the swag, Peters was on the dead level.

They had reason to know Peters. Most of them had formed part of his crew in the old *Bermuda* when she sailed out of Jacksonville, before the war killed business in those parts. Several had also been with him in the famous schooner, *Island Fairy*, when Kalakaua's old banner flew from her mizzen gaff. Then came that little matter of half a ton of opium which created such a stir in Honolulu that the Peters gang found it expedient to move on to other fields of enterprise. And what could be more natural than the reunion of so Bohemian a clique in so Bohemian a city as Manila? Here it was that Portsmouth Peters came upon his new commission.

But agreed as these ten gallant sailormen were on this one point, no two of them held the same opinion as to what the game really was. They had signed on in shipshape fashion, left port with official pilot, carried a cargo of tobacco and had aboard two passengers. And there came the rub. These two passengers could

in nowise be accounted for — in none of the ten theories could they be fitted.

Both were native Filipinos. One, whom Peters frequently addressed as Mr. Flores, was an elderly gentlemen whose wrinkled features habitually wore a mild, abstracted air. Him they judged to be of some consequence in the game, for Peters consulted him frequently, and Peters was not usually of the consulting sort.

The second passenger was a younger man, a mere boy, and seemed to be either secretary or travelling companion to Mr. Flores. He rarely spoke, and then only to his compatriot.

For two days the *Siragao* held a southerly course. On the morning of the third, land was sighted dead ahead, but the wheel remained unshifted. By eight bells they had the cocoa palms on both beams and by nine o'clock dropped anchor at the farther end of a bay, off the bar of a small river. The helmsman was sent for'ard, there to communicate to his comrades the still more mystifying intelligence that Mr. Flores had piloted the vessel in.

Meanwhile, the towering form of the captain leaned over the bridge railing, the comparatively insignificant figure of the old native in a like attitude beside him. Both were contemplating the scenery surrounding. The water, calm and blue as the surface of an inland lake, reflected about its edges shivering images of the cocoa palms on the beach. Out of the dense confusion of tropical foliage on one side of the river mouth peeped the *nipa* thatches of a native village, interspersed here and there by the red baked tiles of some more pretentious edifice, the home of a local dignitary or Chinese merchant. From a bamboo pole that rose from the centre of the village, a small American flag hung in listless folds, exposing its crimson bars in occasional flaps, caused by the varying currents of air that stirred the bamboo tops.

Soon the yellow sands below the village were dotted by the scantily clad natives, who stood curiously regarding the newly arrived vessel. Some of the more practical minded later ventured out in dugout canoes, offering for sale chickens, bananas, eggs and monkeys, finding ready buyers among the steamer's crew.

Peters regarded the scene with interest. Its natural beauty appealed to the artistic side of his nature, for, strange as it may seem, David Russel Peters, filibuster, smuggler and master

mariner, was also a painter whose canvases were not entirely unknown to fame.

"This is a fairly big town, isn't it, Mr. Flores?" commented the skipper at last, turning to his companion.

Mr. Flores took the gold-rimmed spectacles from his eyes and carefully wiped them.

"Yes," he answered, "it ees change much in five year."

Again both were silent. The men on the main deck were lowering the gig. The younger passenger now appeared on the bridge, carefully dressed in starchy white. He and Flores remained for some time in close conversation, although Flores seemed to be the principal speaker, the youth merely nodding an occasional assent. At last the young man once more descended to the deck and some minutes later was being pulled shoreward in the gig.

Peters soon went below, but, despite a burning sun, Flores remained on the bridge. Sometimes he would shuffle to and fro in his heelless *chinelas*, or, at short intervals, be seated in a canvas deck chair, but rarely were his eyes removed from the stretch of sand below the village.

Towards noon the ship's boat was seen returning. The old man on the bridge watched her approach with eager eyes.

"Hurry, hurry!" he cried in Spanish as the youth ascended the gangway.

"Well, have you succeeded?" The old man's words quivered anxiously. The face of the boy was serious. He shook his head.

"No, he will not sell."

"*Dios mio!*" exclaimed Flores, but said no more. Peters heard from the cabin door; evidently he understood all. The two natives descended to the main deck and joined the captain in the cabin.

Peters and Flores spent the greater part of the afternoon on the bridge. At sunset, as supper was being served them where they sat, on a small Japanese table, they were joined by the boy. For some time into the evening they remained there, smoking cigars and conversing in low voices. Both the natives betrayed a certain nervousness — the quivering of the flesh which overtakes even the bravest with the knowledge of a desperate struggle drawing nigh. Only Peters smoked with a calm complacency, twirling his long tawny whiskers thoughtfully. Peters had been

too long in the business to show the state of his nerves. As eight bells of the last dog watch struck, the three went below.

The watches were relieving one another at midnight when the captain reappeared on deck.

"Mr. Bruce," he said to the mate, "send all hands to their stations. Lower the gig and man her with six men. I want you to take charge of her yourself — make no noise — muffle the oars — all of you put on your black oilskins. The boy's going with you — take your directions from him."

With an "Aye, aye, sir," the mate hurried to fulfil the orders of his superior. The two passengers had by this time joined Peters on the bridge. The starchy white of the youth had given place to a pair of dark-colored trousers. From the waist up he was naked, his feet were bare, and from a girdle about his loins hung a leather-sheathed bolo. So appeared the common laborers and fishermen.

With little noise the boat was lowered from her davits and as silently the black forms of the mate and his men took their places. Like a dark moon shadow the boat glided away from the ship's side and melted into the gloom that enveloped the shore.

On the steamer all hands stood silently waiting at their stations. The only break in the midnight stillness was the hoarse coughing of machinery below and the roar of hot air pouring up through the funnel, loaded with clouds of dense coal smoke and occasional showers of sparks. Two figures on the bridge leaned over the railing, watching that part of the vaguely outlined shore for which the boat had made.

An hour passed. Almost two had gone when a distant phosphorescent glow crept over the water's surface from the beach.

"All's well," came floating faintly out of the darkness.

"Heave away, for'ard," cried the captain. A metallic clank, followed by the hissing of escaping steam, broke the long-kept silence; men scampered about the decks, hauling ropes, ye-hoing, while the capstan for'ard chattered; the vessel moved uneasily as the weight of the anchor came upon her. The gig shot alongside, was hooked into the tackles and by steam winches hoisted to a level with the bulwarks. The seven seamen scrambled to the deck, followed by the slighter form of the Filipino. The native and the mate then turned and helped aboard what seemed to be the figure

of a dwarf or a child. Flores, who had been eagerly pressing himself forward, seized it with a cry and lifting it into his arms disappeared down the cabin doorway.

Peters remained on the bridge. With a firm hand he turned the engine-room telegraph to half speed ahead. The vessel trembled, and moved slowly, swinging her bow around towards the mouth of the harbor.

Suddenly a loud, crashing explosion shook every beam of the vessel. A dense column of hissing steam burst up through the engine-room grating abaft the bridge. The machinery had stopped. Peters swung around to the grating.

"What in hell's the matter down there?" he roared through the speaking tube. The gurgling of water and steam was the only answer. He turned once more to the telegraph and frantically jerked the lever backwards and forwards, but the engines failed to respond.

"Cap'n," called a voice from the engine-room companionway on the main deck, "we've busted a flue in the starboard b'iler. Can't move until it's repaired."

"Damn you to hell!" howled the skipper. "Bos'n, let go the anchor again."

. . . . . .

The rising sun found Portsmouth Peters pacing the bridge in moody silence. At times he would stop to examine the shore through a brass binocular.

On the beach below the village scores of excited natives were running in and out among the stranded canoes, and this commotion was constantly being increased by the arrival of new groups from the town above. Finally, one of the larger dugouts, a barge, was launched and filled by a crew of tawny paddlers. The broad-bladed paddles dipped and glistened in the morning sunlight, shooting the barge over the oily surface of the calm water towards the *Siragao*. In the after part, under a light blue awning, sat a small, fat native, a white suit and a bright red turban making him a strange contrast to the half-naked paddlers. As the barge came within a ship's length of the steamer the paddles dropped and the gentleman in the flaming head dress rose to his feet. Twice he salaamed, and then, in the name of God and the Prophet, he called for the attention of the Americanos. In broken Spanish he en-

treated them to give him justice. He had been robbed — vilely robbed—and in the name of peace he demanded that his goods be returned. Peters was about to reply when Flores leaped from the chart house to his side.

"Don Ambrosio," screamed the old man, extending both his clenched hands towards the chief in the boat, "justice! justice! You cry for justice! Where is the justice you owe me? Give *me* justice, you traitor!"

The vehemence of the old man's words exhausted his strength — he reeled, and had it not been for Peters would have fallen. The datto stood stiff, blankly staring. The sight of Flores seemed to stupefy him for a moment, but only for a moment; with a snort he exploded. Snorts, screams, yells, words, gurgles — all one wild jumble. What he said only Flores knew. To Peters it was immaterial — the fat Moro's antics only brought a grin to his stolid features in spite of two thousand spears that glittered beyond.

"What's he chawing about?" he asked Flores, indifferently. "Raking over old reminiscences, eh?"

Flores did not hear; he was speaking to the chief in low, soothing tones, but he might as well have spared his words — his efforts to placate his old enemy's anger were too strongly counterbalanced by a row of grinning faces along the steamer's bulwarks. The little chief's dignity was wounded. With a final scream of rage he motioned the paddlers about and the barge swung slowly around and returned to the main fleet lying shoreward out of rifle range. Flores turned to Peters and the two conversed in low, serious tones for some moments. Suddenly the captain swung about to the main deck below.

"Mr. Bruce," he cried, "have the hose screwed on to the donkey boiler. Bring the Winchesters up from the rack. Allow no boat within a ship's length of the gangway."

All the canoes on the beach had by this time been launched, and as the datto's barge joined them a mighty hum arose as from a hive of disturbed bees. Over fifty in number and squirming with naked paddlers, they formed a huge semicircle. In this formation they slowly and cautiously approached the *Siragao*, the datto's barge prominently in the centre.

Peters, his chief mate and the two passengers stood upon the

bridge, each clasping in his hands a Winchester rifle. On the main deck, from the bridge for'ard, the seamen were strung along the railing, using the bulwarks as a breastwork. The engineers and stokers formed in a similar firing line aft. Two men stood by the steam hose.

The canoes advanced, closing in like a fisherman's seine, an overwhelming swarm, the glint of steel weapons flashing against the sombre background of savage humanity. Peters stepped to the railing.

"*Alto!*" he roared.

The approaching swarm paid no heed.

"*Alto!*" he cried again.

Never was a sentry's halt more disregarded. Again, for the third and last time.

"*Alto!*"

A derisive howl was the only reply.

"Let 'em have it, boys." The captain's words, clear and loud, sent a line of rifle barrels flashing into the sunlight — the rattling crash of a volley followed. From several of the canoes wounded men leaped into the water. Again the seamen were about to deliver a volley when a strange thing happened.

In one of the outward canoes of the semicircle a warrior sprang to his feet and by screams and gesticulations endeavored to attract the attention of his fellow-combatants. Frantically he waved his arms towards the entrance of the bay. The paddles and Winchesters of Moros and whites dropped. All heads turned towards the sand spit that formed a protecting arm to the harbor.

There, rounding the point, heaving a white fold of the calm blue water before her, came a small side-wheeled steamer, one of those antiquated river and coast patrol boats taken from the Spanish. From a short, stumpy pole aft fluttered the colors of her conquerors.

With one accord the canoes turned about and made for the shore. Slowly and heavily, the patrol boat pounded her course inward, swashing the water at her sides into milky froth. Past the *Siragao* she crept, dropping her anchor when close in shore. By this time the canoes had all been beached, excepting the datto's barge, which glided alongside the patrol boat, the datto himself boarding her.

On the *Siragao* all hands were piped below, leaving only a quartermaster at the gangway. "But stand by for a moment's call," were the skipper's orders.

Four bells of the afternoon watch struck on the two vessels almost simultaneously. A boat was lowered from the government side-wheeler. With regular oar strokes a dozen white-clad figures pulled it towards the *Siragao*. As it made fast to the gangway a young naval officer leaped aboard. A moment later he appeared on the bridge, where Peters and Flores received him. The two Americans looked into each other's eyes. Instinctively their hands went out towards each other, but fell again without meeting.

The three seated themselves about the Japanese table, whereon the steward spread wine and cigars. At first the conversation between the two Americans was quiet and formal. The steward brought up from the cabin a small iron box from which the ship's clearing papers were produced. Apparently all were in legal form, for, with a nod of approval, the officer replaced them.

Then the conversation waxed warm. Hands were brought into play for gesticulation and the tone of each speaker became more aggressive. Flores remained a passive but interested listener. At last the commander of the patrol boat rose hurriedly and tripped lightly down to the main deck, his cheeks discolored by an angry flush. His hand was on the man rope of the gangway when he turned.

"Remember, Captain Peters," he called, with sarcastic emphasis on the title, "I'll give you until five o'clock. You can't work any of your piratical rackets on me; I am too foxy for your kind."

With a bound the skipper reached the lieutenant's side. Instinctively the latter's hand dropped to the sword dangling from his hip. Peters merely shook his finger in the other's face.

"Look here," he cried hoarsely, "I don't take that from you. No man with a record like yours reviles me."

"What d'ye mean?" snapped the lieutenant.

"You know, or will know, damn ye," continued Peters, furiously. "By God, I may be a pirate, as you call me, but I am an honest one, and this little job on my hands now I am proud of. You — you — you're not even a dishonest *man;* you're a cowardly blackmailer."

The lieutenant's face turned ashy white. His sword rattled in its scabbard as he grasped its hilt.

"I can prove my words," the skipper went on. "I know your moves better than you're aware of. We've met once or twice, you and I, since I left the *Marblehead*. Do you remember the *Island Fairy* in Honolulu, when you were there in the *Bennington?* Of course not, you didn't see me; we weren't on visiting terms then, but we met one night, nevertheless. Now, if I should refresh your memory just a trifle, do you think you would remember Ah Sam's little tobacco store on King Street? It isn't a common meeting place for gentlemen of the navy, but on rare occasions one drops in there, *in the rear*."

"What the devil are you talking about?" snarled the lieutenant.

"Oh, nothing. I was only recalling old reminiscences. Damn your hypocritical soul, I recognized you, in spite of your civilian rags and your little bundle of sardine tins. But I never interfered with your game, although the ring was hot against you. Now you have the gall to preach duty and morals to me. I've always been true to my colors, white or black — you can't say the same, you traitorous hound. I quit the service because I couldn't serve myself and the government too, but you sail under white colors to hide your black heart. Now get off this deck before I heave you."

Peters had lost all control of his temper. Each word he spoke drove a nail into the coffin of his scheme, but this he failed to realize until too late. The lieutenant stepped down the gangway.

"Peters," he called, as he seated himself in the boat and motioned the men to shove off, "whatever you may be, you're no diplomat, as you'll see before sunset."

As the gig of the patrol boat pulled back, Peters returned to the bridge, where he found Flores resting his head in his arms on the table. Well enough did the old man understand English to know what the conversation had signified to his happiness. For a moment Peters stood at the old Filipino's side, silently regarding the bent form. It recalled him to his true self. Softly he placed his big broad hand on the thin narrow shoulders.

"Mr. Flores," he said, "you've always acted on the square with me. You were simple enough to pay before the work was done, but I will show you that your confidence was not misplaced.

Come, the fight's not lost yet, and I am with you as long as there's any fighting to be done. I swear that the boy stays with you while there's a shot left between my timbers."

The old man looked up. His spectacles were moist.

"Thank you, my friend," he said. "I have de gret confidence een you."

. . . . . .

Portsmouth Peters paced his bridge again, deep in thought.

"Mr. Bruce," he called suddenly, "order all hands to muster aft — the whole ship's company."

Gradually the entire crew assembled on the main deck below the bridge. Peters stood above, facing them, gripping the railing tightly with his hands. Calmly he surveyed the rugged seamen below him, a cigar between his exposed teeth. All were there. An expectant silence followed.

"Mr. McIntyre," began Peters in a low voice, "when will the engines be in condition to pull us out of here?"

"Four o'clock at the latest, sir," was the chief engineer's reply.

"Good." This was the skipper's only comment.

"Men," he continued, in a louder tone, taking the cigar from between his teeth, "perhaps I've made a mistake in not taking you into the game before now, but most of you know me well enough to trust me — know that I am always on the square.

"I'd expected to run this expedition through with very little trouble, but my temper got the best of me, and — well, now I am in a hole — a hole I can't get out of unless you all stand by me. I believe you'll do it; I know you all — but still I don't want to have you blame me afterwards for leading you into a trap if things go wrong. I want every man to understand the situation, and then he's free to choose, aye or no.

"Mr. Flores, the old gentleman with us, is the party responsible for this little trip of ours. Five years ago he left this place ashore — left it in a hurry, because the little chap you all saw this morning in the barge didn't like him, and it wasn't healthy being disliked by him, as you came near seeing yourselves this morning. So Flores escaped to Manila by the breadth of a Plimsoll mark, but, through the treachery of a servant, his wife and child got left behind. The wife died soon after and the little cuss ashore got

hold of the son and held him for debts he claimed the father owed him, legally held him by Spanish laws as a slave. Flores went to Hong Kong because the Spanish governor at Manila didn't like him either. He did well there in the tobacco trade, earned good money and made his pile. Several times he sent for the son, offering to buy at any price, but for the old grudge the chief wouldn't sell. So what does Flores do but get up this little yachting party, and with the help of a score of husky Americans he takes what's his by all laws of justice.

"Now, we've got the son, but here comes that little wash tub yonder and raises an objection — says I can't take a man's private property, and our treaty with these people recognizes a slave as such. There isn't an officer in the American Navy but what would give me the wink to this job, but it so happens that yonder brass-bound monkey owes me a grudge from old days when I wore Uncle Sam's silver braid. We were shipmates, and we didn't like each other. So he intends to have me toe the mark.

"But, in spite of her modern machine guns, his old craft is only good for seven knots to our fifteen, and I propose to run out before she gets half a dozen turns out of her paddles. Now, to the point — will you men stand by me? There's a hundred dollars apiece in it if we cut clear, and a term in Bilibid if we don't. Now — what is it — what d'ye say?"

A silence followed the skipper's words. The men seemed dazed. At last the second mate stepped forward.

"Cap'n," he said, "don't our treaty with these people compel every slave owner to sell whenever the price is offered? Seems to me I remember reading that in the Manila *Times*."

The captain laughed — a sarcastic laugh.

"That's all well enough on paper, my lad, but who's going to enforce it? That's a dead letter. Leave it to the native courts, says my old shipmate yonder, but that's exactly what Flores has been doing for five years, and they've got the same laws now they had then. No; there's only one way out of it, and that's a swift, sliding keel. Once out of here we'll never be troubled; public sentiment at home wouldn't stand it. Besides, I know just what Admiral Watson's sentiments are on this question."

Another pause, and then the bos'n stepped out.

"Cap'n," he said, "I am satisfied that the game is fair and above board as far as you're concerned, but be you sure that this Flores is on the square with you? Be you sure the man's a slave — the real genooine article — and not a runaway criminal — an escaped convict?"

Peters made a gesture of impatience. He opened the door to the chart room abaft the bridge and called down the companion-way. Again he faced his men. A moment after they saw the chart-room door reopen — they saw Flores appear, and clinging to his arm a slight childish figure with a girlish brown face and long matted curls hanging down over two pleading black eyes. The captain pointed to the child.

"Bos'n," he said, "does that look like a convict?"

The old sailor stared, dumfounded.

"No, by God, no," he cried. "I am with you, cap'n, for hell or wherever you say."

The almost fierce enthusiasm in his voice transmitted itself to the group of seamen behind him. A cheer broke out — then a wild chorus of jumbled words — "Aye, aye, aye — So be we — Me too — We're with ye — Let her go — We'll stick — Clean to hell."

The captain smiled.

"I knew it," he said softly.

Eight bells of the afternoon watch rolled over the placid waters of the bay — peacefully — they might have been church bells. Black vapors had been lazily curling out of the *Siragao's* funnel, but soon they thickened, becoming big, heaving clouds of dense coal smoke, tumbling out like huge balls of black cotton.

A bell tingled in the engine room; the vessel trembled, quivered, and a frothing fountain of white foam shot up from under her stern. A loud crash forward — several fathoms of cable shot out of her hawse pipe with a thundering splash, and the *Siragao* moved ahead.

In a moment the decks of the patrol boat, half a mile farther inshore, were swarming with white-clad figures. She also slipped her cable as her huge wooden paddles began revolving.

Suddenly a white ball of smoke shot upward from the for'ard deck of the gunboat and a thundering explosion reverberated between the two shores. A succession of white spots shot across the

blue surface of the water some distance astern of the *Siragao*. The filibuster was gaining headway. Again came the flash, blinding even in the sun's tropical glare, and a shell screeched between the *Siragao's* two masts. Rapidly she was forging ahead — the patrol boat was now almost a mile astern.

Five minutes passed — something had fouled the gun on the paddle boat — frantically the white figures on her for'ard deck tugged at the impediment. The *Siragao's* wheel was spinning around, hard aport; gracefully she rounded the sand spit and plunged into the ocean swell, when — bang — once more the gunboat blazed away.

Hardly had the echoes died away in the neighboring forests when a second crash followed — the pilot house on the *Siragao* had disappeared in a cloud of flying timbers. For some moments she shot wildly ahead, then gave a lurch and rolled helplessly over on the sand bar.

Cheers arose from the patrol boat. Steadily she bore down on the stranded steamer, bringing up within as short a distance as she dared approach. A boat was lowered and pulled towards the disabled vessel. From afar already they saw the towering figure of the skipper at the gangway. The lieutenant hailed.

"*Siragao*, ahoy!"

"Hello!"

"I am going to board you."

"Come on; make yourself at home."

The lieutenant leaped to the deck of the steamer, almost on a level with the water.

"Dave," he cried, angrily, "you might have avoided this. I only did what you compelled me to do."

Peters smiled grimly and shrugged his right shoulder. The lieutenant gasped — the man before him calmly smoked a cigar while a shattered, bloody arm hung helplessly at his side.

"You may take the boy now," he said, with an almost diabolical grin, pointing amidships. "Go, and take him."

The lieutenant walked mechanically in the direction indicated. Some of the men stood listlessly about the decks, strewn with débris. Some scowled savagely others appeared in a state of dogged resignation. A few were stooping over the body of a

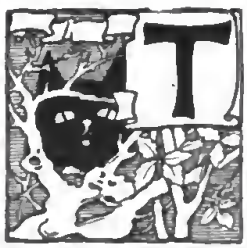
man in blue overalls, reclining on a hatch. About his mouth and nostrils blood bubbles formed and burst.

Suddenly the officer became aware of a low moaning cry behind him: "Akoo — akooo — akooo–o–o–o–o," a Filipino death wail. With a quick movement he turned. His eyes fell on a small after hatch he stood aghast. On the tarry tarpaulin lay the mangled body of a child, its long black hair clotted with fresh blood. An old man crouched beside, his face buried in his wrinkled hands. The lieutenant stiffened with horror. Something touched his shoulder. He started and turned. It was Peters.

"You are right, Bill, this might have been avoided — I might have known you better. A few hundred pesos' worth of diplomacy could have done it, eh?"

Mr. Roswell's Shave.*

BY GEORGE C. GARDNER.



THE Hon. Rutland P. Roswell was in a bad humor, and he had reason to be ruffled. To begin with, even for a man whose worldly circumstances are such that his vacations are purely a matter of personal inclination, it is exasperating to have them cut short. The Hon. Mr. Roswell was such a man, but he took his vacations none the less sparingly on that account. He valued them highly, for they cost him in lost time at least eight hundred dollars a day. So he cursed outwardly and inwardly at the cipher telegram which had reached him at his camp in the woods the night before, calling him imperatively to his office. To save time he had driven thirty miles that morning over a mountain road, made chiefly of mud and rocks, instead of journeying in ease and comfort down the lake by his accustomed route. The driver and owner of the team which carried him demanded twenty dollars, and got it — for his was the only team within five miles of the camp — and now that Mr. Roswell had reached the railroad at the hamlet of Ashton, the train was two hours late. He had wired down the line for an engine. There was none to be had. He would lose his day connection at Wall's River and that meant an all-night ride in a sleeper and barely time to get from the train to his office by eleven next day. He disliked a sleeper in August, and, worse than that, his costume and his beard, on which he rather prided himself in camp, he had never worn in New York, and he realized that his appearance at the meeting there next morning would be commented upon. On the whole, it was not surprising that Mr. Roswell was in a bad humor.

The station-agent, who had sent his despatches, locked up his office and came around to the shady side of the platform where Mr. Roswell stood.

"Muggy, ain't it?" said he.

"Yes," said Mr. Roswell.

"Found a good deal o' mud drivin' over fr'm — I d'n' know's you said from where you come?"

"No," remarked Mr. Roswell, "I didn't."

"Feller that drove you was a stranger round here, wa'n't he?"

"I don't know."

"You ain't related to the Bardoe Roswells?"

"No."

"Want me to lock your grip up in the ticket-office so's you won't have to lug it round?"

"I can take care of it myself."

"Wall, I'm goin' up the rud a little way. See you later. You'll have an hour 'nd a half. She won't make up more'n fifteen minutes," and the station-agent slouched across the gravel patch behind the station and up the straggling village street.

Left alone, the Hon. Rutland sat on the shady side of the platform and busied himself with various papers and clippings in his bag. It was hot, insufferably hot, and the flies were abominable. It was one of the days when they stuck.

After three-quarters of an hour of it, he became, if possible, more ill-humored than ever. He decided to walk up into the village. He knew no one there and he didn't care to know any one, but the street from the station looked cool, so he picked up his bag and started.

The first person he met was the station-agent on his way back to the station. He had evidently been shaved and looked as cool and comfortable as a man could look in such weather.

"The Quebec freight's due in about fifteen minutes," he explained; "goin' for a little stroll?"

"Yes," said Mr. Roswell.

"Just as well leave your grip with me in the office's not."

"No, I'll carry it." An idea came to Mr. Roswell, and he asked, "Is there a decent barber here?"

The agent looked at him narrowly. "I never heard nothin'

against Lije Barrus, 'nd he's been shaving folks for thirty years. Right up the rud, where you see that sign; he runs the drug-store too."

Mr. Roswell went on. He had still half an hour, and if he could get shaved decently here it would add greatly to his peace of mind next morning. Clean linen he had in his bag, the porter would make his clothes and shoes presentable that night on the train, and with his beard gone he would be able to appear at his office in his normal condition.

He followed the agent's directions and entered the barber's shop. The windows were screened, it was dark and cool, and the odor of bay rum, camphor and ether was refreshing.

The barber put the worn *Police Gazette* which he was reading on the table, and his feet on the floor.

"Can't you get me shaved before the train goes south?" said the Honorable Rutland.

"Train's gone, ain't it?" said the barber.

"No, it's late. You've got half an hour."

"Did you mean *shave* or a trim?"

"I said shave."

The barber hesitated a moment. "Why, yes, I can. Yes, they's plenty of time."

The Honorable Rutland settled himself in the chair. "Take care of my neck," said he; "it is tender."

"Ain't had a beard long?" remarked the barber as he lathered copiously. His customer grunted for response and closed his eyes.

"Makes a considerable change in a man's face, takin' off his beard," volunteered the barber, as he began shaving. "Generally a man looks younger that way; sometimes it ages 'em, though. Take a man your age now, take out his false teeth, 'nd he'll look ten years older without a beard than he does with."

"I'm paying you to shave me before my train comes," remarked Mr. Roswell. "Suppose you stop talking and do it."

The barber had just finished one side of his customer's face. He smiled at Mr. Roswell, a smile shrewd and cunning, which seemed to imply a deep knowledge of human nature. "Speakin' of payin'," said he, "maybe I forgot to say that shavin' beards is extry."

"Well, I'm willing to pay you a quarter," said Mr. Roswell; "but go ahead, man, you haven't got any time to spare."

The barber stopped relathering the other cheek, picked up his razor and leaning over Mr. Roswell said, with his wise smile, "It'll take about three hundred dollars to finish this side. Gee whiz! Lay still; I 'most cut you."

After the convulsive jump which the barber's remark brought forth, the Honorable Rutland lay back weakly in the chair, the shaven cheek whiter than the lather on the unshaven one. For a moment he thought the man crazy, but only for a moment. The barber went on. "You needn't be worried. I kinder suspected you might be one of them kinder fellers when Abel Jenks spoke about you — Abel's the depot master — but I ain't pryin'; I don't want you to tell me nothin'; jest hand me the money now, 'nd I'll finish you right up. If you was to tell me too much I might feel 'sif I was compoundin' a felony. Three years ago they was a feller come here from across Moose Range, 'nd he gives me two hundred of his own accord. He was goin' north to Canada. I read about him in the paper some time after. He was a bank president, 'nd — "

"Will you stop your infernal nonsense and finish shaving me? My name is Rutland P. Roswell. I'm President of the Consolidated Mine Trust. Haven't you ever heard of my camp over on Tauquomoc Lake?"

"You lay still," responded the barber; "you'll git cut. I don't want to know who you be, or what you done. They was a mine president up here some nine years back — a gold mine he had — 'nd he sold Deacon Collins up the street here a forty-pound sample of it, solid gold, for eighty-five dollars. The Deacon's got it now for a door striker to his best parlor, but that ain't the p'int. I don't want to know who you be. I'm constable here, and if you should say anything to make me suspicious, it would be my duty to take you up, you and your grip. You can pay me three hundred dollars for shavin' ye — you've got more'n than that, Abel see it when you paid him to the depot — 'nd I'll finish ye right up and ask no questions 'nd you'll get your train. Or you can get right out of my place as you be now, and I'll arrest you as a suspicious person if I find you here two hours later. No," in answer to a tentative

offer of fifteen dollars; "they ain't no time to dicker; three hundred dollars or go as you be."

The Honorable Rutland thought rapidly. His great success as a financier was largely due to his ability to think rapidly. He couldn't take the train as he was. He couldn't prove his identity to this idiot. If he lost his train he would lose — certainly more than three hundred dollars, perhaps a thousand times more. He was cornered, and he respected the man who could corner him. He unwrapped six fifty-dollar bills from a fat roll and fifteen minutes later, smooth faced and redolent of bay rum, boarded the southbound train.

"Abel," said the barber that evening as they sat together in the little office behind the drug counter, "the thought came to me that that money he had might not have been come by honest. Thinks I, he may have wrung it from widders and orphans and I'd be takin' it from them, but I didn't think they'd suffer for fifteen dollars, Abel — that's what he offered me — and I promised to give you half," and he counted out seven dollars and a half from the well-worn cash drawer.

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The ideal food for picnickers is Grape-Nuts, which is thoroughly cooked at the factory and is always ready to serve with the addition of cream.

A package of Grape Nuts, a bottle of cream, some fruit, and you have a luncheon for home or abroad that is inexpensive, pleasing to the palate, and best of all, nourishing without causing internal heat or the draggy feeling caused by heavy food.

Grape-Nuts is the perfect food for hot weather, for in its pre-digested form it makes digestion easy, its crisp daintiness is charming to all and the escape from the hot stove appeals to the housewife.

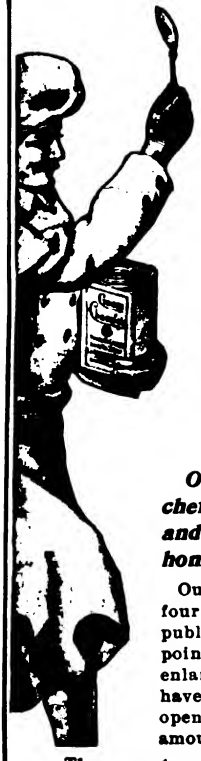
For camping, Grape-Nuts proves a most convenient food and a goodly supply should always be taken; it is used by some epicures in frying fish, for it adds a delightful flavor and is naturally superior to the ordinary crumbed crackers or corn meal for this purpose.

Many easy, hot weather recipes are found in each package for luncheon and supper desserts.

Grand PRIZE RECIPE Contest

$666.00 IN CASH PRIZES

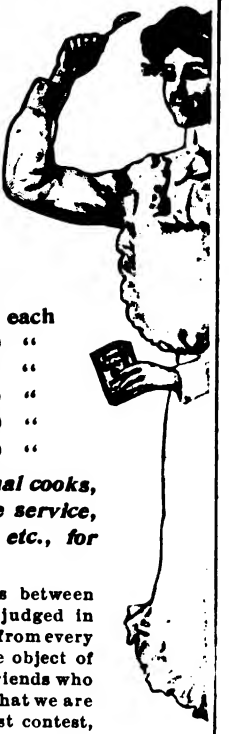
To be Given Away for Best Recipes for Use of



Cream of Chocolate

PURE

TRADE MARK.



One	cash prize of . .	$50.00
Two	cash prizes of . .	25.00 each
Four	" " . .	12.50 "
Eight	" " . .	6.25 "
Ten	" " . .	5.00 "
Twenty	" " . .	2.50 "
366	" " . .	1.00 "

Of this, $200 is offered specially to professional cooks, chefs, etc., for recipes for hotel and other large service, and $466 to household cooks, housekeepers, etc., for home recipes.

Our first prize contest in September, 1901, brought us between four and five hundred recipes, which were cooked and judged in public at the Philadelphia Food Show. This contest was from every point of view a perfect success; and it is only with the object of enlarging our recipe book, and gratifying those of our friends who have expressed a desire to enter another competition, that we are opening this second competition. The prizes in the first contest, amounting to $555, were paid December 20, 1901.

The present contest will open September 1 and will close December 1. We hope to have all the recipes judged and tried and to pay the prizes by March 1.

Full particulars, instructions and blanks will be sent to any address on receipt of one coupon from a Cream of Chocolate can, or of the amount necessary to pay for a can, as stated below. It is necessary to have Cream of Chocolate and our regular blanks in order to compete.

Cream of Chocolate is the latest and best product of the cocoa bean. Absolutely pure, very wholesome and nourishing. It is the great food drink. Best for cooking, best for drinking. So simple that a child can use it. It is always economical, convenient and satisfactory. If your dealer does not supply you with Cream of Chocolate on request, we will deliver a half-pound can, trial size, to any address by mail, 25 cents, and a five-pound can, family size, to any address in the United States or Canada outside of Rocky Mountain district, for $1.97, post-office order.

Cream of Chocolate Company 72 Main Street, Danvers, Mass.